File 1
00:00
(All right. It is July 9th, 2005. It's a Saturday morning, and I'm interviewing Odon Corr, and you spell that O-d-o-n C-o-r-r. This is Nancy Freeman. And we will just get started here, Odon. Tell me a little bit about where you grew up.)

OK. I was born in southern Minnesota, but as a—at a early age, I think I was four years old, we moved to,South Dakota, to my grandfather. One of my grandfathers had homesteaded there. And that was in 1937, and I grew up on my grandfather's homestead, up until I was a teenager, and then we moved into the town of Summit. But I, I liked the, you know, farm and ranch life, and that's what I got accustomed to, and it was just a great experience. It—where I grew up reminds me a lot of where I am now, the hilly, hilly part of the state. I guess that's why I'm here now, because I like—it, reminds me of the old home place.

(And where was that, roughly?)

It was, northeastern South Dakota. It was near—Summit was our town, but there's a range of hills, the Coteau Hills, run through there, and they run from, oh, like, Gary, South Dakota all the way to the North Dakota line, and Summit, of course, is right—was a high point in the hills. And my grandfather homesteaded east of Summit three miles. I get back up there every once in a while. We don't own the land any more, but it's great to go up and look it over.

(And what hills are they?)

01:59
(They call 'em the Coteau Hills. I don't know if that's just a generalized term for ranges of hills or not, but that's what they're known at—known as, and it's—the Sisseton-Wahpeton reservation goes right through there. Our place was just off the edge of the reservation, but there's a lot of lakes, natural lakes up there, glacial lakes, and it's a great area.

(And could you spell the hills? How do you spell—?)

(chuckles) It's a French name. It's C-o-t-e-a-u, or something like that. I may be wrong there. (chuckles)

(And did you grow up hunting and trapping and—?)

Oh, yes, yes. My mother trapped in the 1920s, and her and my Uncle Herman used to run trap lines, and that's what got my interest, I guess, as a little kid. I'd see all these traps hanging in our machine shed, you know, and of course I had to find out about those. So I started out trapping ground squirrels and just kind of gradually moved on up to larger things. But my mother taught me how to skin animals and prepare pelts and even set traps and things like that.

03:18
Of course, they dealt mainly with smaller animals, species like muskrats and skunks and weasels and some mink. But the coyote thing, one thing, when I was a small boy, there wasn't any red fox in that area. They came after that. And, so I got—I was real fascinated with the coyotes, so I,

I started working with those, and eventually I started catching them, at about probably twelve years old.

(Now, did your mother do this for income, or—?)

Not—Well, if you go back and I think study the history of the fur business, fur was quite high in the '20s, you know. And I'm sure they trapped for supplemental income. That was before my mother was married. She was still on the home place there, and my Uncle Herman was a couple years older, and they used to—not probably run extensive trap lines, but they trapped quite a little. And my uncle, I know, had many traps when I was a little kid there, and—but mainly for muskrats and things like that.

(And she continued trapping after she got married?)

04:30
Yeah, she taught me, and then as—when I got older, I can remember when I first started trapping, I was so small I couldn't even set a little #1 trap. And my dad would have to set the trap for me, and then I would go out—I was trapping ground squirrels. And I would take the set trap and go out in the pasture, and I know sometimes I'd fall down and the trap'd go off. Then I'd have to walk way back and have him set it again.

So finally I became adept at, uh, setting these traps, which was a great improvement. I didn't have to walk back with it sprung open! (laughs) But yeah, and then I, from there I guess I moved on to skunks and muskrats and all that stuff. And my mother was a great help, you know, she taught me, and then she'd go with me checking traps sometimes.

(Did your father trap?)

Oh, a little bit. He really didn't have the interest in it that my mother did. We hunted some, Dad and I, but my mother was more into trapping. We used to even skin skunks and things. She would help me with that. And you know, not too many mothers would help kids skin skunks, probably, but she did. And of course, you know, at that time, gosh, I think we got—I remember it as high as three-and-a-half dollars for a skunk and three-and-a-half dollars was quite a lot of money, you know, back in those days, because men, grown men, were probably working for a couple dollars a day. So a lot of people trapped. And so it was a supplement to the farm income back in those late '30s and early '40s. Not so much, I don't remember much about the '30s, but the early '40s, I really remember that.

And we used to sell our furs to most of 'em, it was Sears Roebuck bought furs. And we always would send these furs in, and it was anticipating the check coming in the mail, you know, see what we're gonna get! (laughs)

06:35
(So you sent them to Sears?)

Yeah, we mailed 'em, and I can remember that the skunk hides, the regular furs we could take to the Post Office, but the skunk hides, we had to wrap them separate and we had to take them to the train depot. They didn't want 'em in the Post Office so they could pick 'em up right there

with the freight! (chuckles) Because even after they were dried out, there was somewhat odor left in 'em. (chuckles)

(That's pretty funny.) (laughs) (I like that.) (laughs)

07:04
(Well, so you grew up trapping and hunting and that type of thing. Tell me a little bit, then, about your educational background and what you did after that.)

Well, I, when I got outa high school, the Korean war was on, and of course, everybody, you know, registered for the draft, and I got drafted into the military in 1954. The war actually was over in '53, but the draft continued I think for probably three or four more years—or at least two or three more years. And I was drafted into the army and I spent two years—I was a army ski trooper. I ended up in Alaska in the ski troops, and I really enjoyed it. I, I was kinda used to cold weather, soyou know, coming from the Dakotas, well. I know some of the fellas from the southern states, they didn't think much of it. They weren't used to cold. (chuckles) It's fairly cold. I was stationed at Fairbanks, and we used to move around in the interior of Alaska, even—in winter and summer, but in the wintertime we used skis all the time.

And after getting out I got out in '56, and I tried working—I did work a short time in the Seattle area there. I got out at Fort Lewis, so I stayed there and worked. But it was factory work, and I didn't care for that, so I thought, "Well, I better make use of my educa—G.I. Bill." So I went back and went to SDSU, [South Dakota State University, Brockings, South Dakota] and I didn't complete the full four years, but I spent over two years at SDSU, and then I, —of course, I was married at the time, and the family was getting larger and I knew about, you know, Fish and Wildlife Service branch, Predator and Rodent Control, and I thought, "Well, maybe I'll see if I can't get on with these people, 'cause I really like that kind of work."

09:11
And I had a friend that used to work for 'em in the summertime, and in fact, he eventually made a career out of it, and he's retired now, too. But, so, I, applied, and I got a job with 'em in—they hired me in April of 1962, I went to work for 'em.

(Before I go on, I am gonna shut that door.)

I can do it.

(OK. Because I think that might take down the beautiful bird noise.)

Is there a bird noise?

(And I would like to go back to the ski patrol. I'm just curious how you got into the ski patrol.)

09:54
Well, we were ski troopers, and a lot of people didn't realize, but the army had—you know, there was a battalion of us there, and we, of course—we didn't—in the summertime in Alaska there's no snow. We did a lot of river crossings and cross-coun—and lived out—actually, I never—I asked one time what our purpose was there, and they said we were to protect the air base that we

were—we were stationed at Ladd Air Force Base, which is right outside of Fairbanks. And it always made me kind of humorous that we were out there with M-1 rifles and those people had jet airplanes, and we were supposed to be protecting 'em! (laughs) But, that's, that's the military for you. And, but I really enjoyed it. It was it was bitterly cold, and I can recall sleeping out, you know, twenty below zero camped out in tents. We had squads. We traveled together on skis. And—and of course in midwinter it's dark pretty near all the time. So we were, -you know, we'd ski for so long and then set up camp, and it was, it was interesting. We lived—we spent the night in these squad tents. There was six of us in a tent. And what we would do, we'd camp for the night, we'd break off boughs off of fir trees or some type of evergreens, and we'd tromp the ground down. First we'd tromp the ground down and we'd set up our tent and we'd put these pine boughs down and so they were about a foot thick and then we'd lay out our mattresses, air mattresses, on top of those.

And then we had a little, what we called a "Yukon stove" that we'd light in there. Of course, that would usually go out during the night, and no one ever would start it up, so it was bitterly cold getting up in the morning. But you learned how to dress inside of a sleeping bag, (chuckles) which was quite a trick! (laughs) And, but I did that for,—I was up there two winters and one summer.

12:09
(Did you do any trapping or hunting while you were up there?)

No, I didn't. We didn't have a chance to do anything. I did see a certain amount of wildlife. I can recall there was a lot of snowshoe rabbits. And I did see a couple of lynx. And I saw a couple of wolves, a lot of caribou, and moose. But I didn't get a chance to do any trapping or hunting.

(So you started with—you started with Bureau of Predator and Rodent Control at that time?)

Yeah, it was US Fish and Wildlife Service, but it was a branch of Predator and Rodent Control. And I was what they called at that time a Mammal Control Agent. Sounds like a real important name. (chuckles) But, uh—and we were that—it seemed like they changed our name quite a lot. We were—I think if we check it back, I think actually we were even called Wildlife Services at one time back then.

(I think you might be right on that. I think I remember that. And you started in '62. And where did you start your work?)

At Miller, South Dakota.

(Which is about where?)

13:29
It's—from right where I'm at here, it's about fifty miles to the northwest.

(So it's central?)

Yeah, central part. It's about straight east of Pierre, a little bit north. Between here and Pierre, you might say, right in that middle marea.

(Is it a certain district area?)

Uh, well, wait, we were—we each had a certain number of counties. And I think—I was tryin' to think how many Mammal Control Agents we had. Most of 'em were stationed west of the Missouri River. The Missouri River, of course, kind of dissects South Dakota into about two equal parts, but most of the—most of the Mammal Control Agents were west-river because a large part of our job was working around sheep operations, and most of the sheep were west-river. Although I did have a fair amount. I—my area covered—well, I had, I think, five counties, and I had quite a little of the river, the Missouri River break. So I was pretty busy all the time. But, uh, there was, I think, probably four or there might have been five of us east-river and the remainder were west-river. And I think total we probably had, like, fifteen. So there was probably ten west and five east.

14:54
(So what did a Mammal Control Agent do in those days?)

Well, we, we were the branch of Predator and Rodent Control, so we actually got into some rodent control. And we would help people with—not individual homes, but smaller towns with rat problems in their dump grounds and things like that. And well, we—sometimes even around feed lots and stuff like that, we would try to help 'em and advise 'em what type of bait to use and sometimes even help put certain types of bait out. So we did get into some rodent control. But the coyote was our main animal that we worked on, we worked on coyote damage control. And then I think there was an agreement with the state of South Dakota, we did quite a lot of beaver work, too, beaver damage work. Or beaver damage control, I meant to say.

And the red fox then—in '62, when I went to work, there was a terrific amount of red fox in South—especially eastern South Dakota. Of course, we didn't have a whole lot of trouble with the red fox. Sometimes they would take newborn lambs, but—and there was a few people still—some of the smaller farms had poultry, but not too much, you know. And of course, they like turkeys and chickens and all that stuff, so occasionally we would work on red fox, too, but not too much. Of course, they—I—the state of South Dakota was real concerned of all these fox and they were decimating their pheasants. Well, they did take a lot of pheasants, but there was so many pheasants and so much habitat that I don't know if the fox was really doin' all that great a harm.

16:49
That was what they—that was during the days when they had these reserve acres on farms. It was a "soil bank," they called it. And there was thousands and thousands of acres in South Dakota, especially in the east half of South Dakota, in this program. And it was a ideal habitat for pheasants and of course, for predators, too. So—but the foxes I'm sure did take a lot of pheasants, but the habitat was more than enough so they didn't get rid of them, you know. There were there. The early '60s were some of the greatest pheasant years they've had in this state ever. And we had all these fox, but we had the habitat.

(And I assume that the concern about taking too many pheasants was because of the hunting?)

Oh, yeah, the hunting, it's a big business in South Dakota, it still is, you know. It brings in a lot of money to the state, and of course, it's hard to think we're gonna lose all our pheasants. Well, and then what happened in the mid-'60s, the soil bank program start to phase out. There was a ten-year program. So this land was starting—was plowed up again. Well, you lost your habitat, and the pheasants just started taking a dive. And the fox were still out there. So right away they thought, "Well, the fox must have killed all these pheasants." Not the biologists. The biologists knew better. But a lot of people thought, "Well, we see these fox and we haven't got any pheasants. We've got to do something about these fox." But it was the destruction of habitat that actually done it.

18:23
(Interesting. Very interesting. Um, so I want to go back a little bit to the coyote. If west-river was to protect sheep from coyotes, then in this area, east-river, or did—?)

Same. It was the same.

(Same?)

There was a certain amount of sheep east-river. In fact, there was quite a lot of sheep east-river, but they didn't have the—more or less out there was kind of the open range conditions where they lambed out in these large pastures, where a lot of the sheep operations east-river were small farm plots where they would probably lamb in the wintertime and they never turned their lambs out on grass. Where west-river, a lot of those people would lamb in April and May and you know, they were very susceptible to coyotes, because lambs are really choice on the coyotes' diet. And, well, they do take adult sheep occasionally, too, but it's pretty hard to have lambs in the pasture if you have coyotes in the area. Eventually they will get a work on you. But no, we did coyote work east-river also, and quite a lot. But not as much, like I say, they had twice as many field people there, at least, as we did, so it gives you some idea of, you know, more of the problem they had.

19:48
But we did have—you know, we worked with beavers a lot, and just about anything, you know, that people had problems with, give 'em some type of assistance, you know, show 'em how to take care of their own problem than actually do it ourselves.

(So after Miller, because I noticed from the form that you moved around several times—)

Yeah, I went to Custer. They moved me to Custer. A fella retired out there, and they didn't want to put a new person, although I was fairly new, I'd only been on for a couple years, and—but they transferred me to Custer. It was quite a change for me, going into a kind of mountains-type setting, coming off the prairie. I'd never lived in anything like that. And that was strictly just about all coyote work there, because at that time, they—I don't know if they still do, but the Forest Service would issue livestock permits on the forest. And there was sheep permits as well as cattle. There was four brothers along the South Dakota/Wyoming border that had quite a number of sheep, and they would take 'em up into the higher country, which we called the limestone area, of the Black Hills. They would take 'em up there in June and leave 'em till September. It was just about a full-time job trapping around them, because there was no other

methods—out in the open prairie, we could probably use aerial hunting some, but up there it was all ground work. So I practically lived up there.

Of course, then I would go—kind of headquarter there, but I would do my other work from there, you know. I'd go back down in the open country. But with all these sheep up there in the summertime, it was quite an attraction for coyotes. Kept me busy. (chuckles)

(So the work there was mainly coyotes?)

21:48
Yeah, mainly coyotes. I did some beaver work, but as I recall, no rodent work and very few fox. Gosh, I caught a red fox out there, I know, in Custer County at that time, and people, a lot of 'em had never seen a fox. That was in the mid-sixties. But I'm sure then they started—I don't think they ever really got very many fox in the higher hills, but east of the hills—because I used to go eastern Custer County and eastern Pennington, and there got to be quite a few fox in later years. But there was always quite a number of coyotes. It was tough working on 'em, because—well, for me it was a lot different trapping there than I was used to, because I mean you're in this terrain up there where it's pretty much all rock and pine needles and very hard to find any tracks and stuff. Where in this type of country here, in the central part of the state, you know, you've always got edges of fields and old trails that farmers go with their tractors where you can pick up tracks and locate these animals. So it's much harder out there. So I got a special feeling for those trappers that have always lived out there. They got a tough job.

(So it was different in the tracking.)

Yeah, tracking. It was hard to locate animals. I've always used dogs as a decoy, dogs and stuff like that, but as far as finding out where are these animals coming from, you know, it was much harder. Of course, there was water holes and stuff like but, but you know, there was just no place they would leave any tracks, unless they would get on maybe a Forest Service trail. Sometimes after a rain you could probably see tracks there, but it was difficult.

23:42
(And then after Custer, where were you?)

Well, then I moved back to Miller then. I was there for two years, and then a job opening came back in Miller and my wife at the time, she kinda wanted to go back. It didn't really make that much difference for me. I liked the work no matter where I was. So we moved back to Miller, and I stayed there then until I went to North Dakota.

(So you moved to Miller when, back?)

Uh, probably, let's see, '62, the first two years was in Miller and then two more years, so it'd be probably '66 I came back to Miller and worked outa there. Then I was there until I moved to North Dakota in '81.

(And when you came back to Miller, was it the same kind of work?)

Same, yeah, just about the same type of work. I did there—one thing in that interim there, the animal damage control was taken over by the state of South Dakota in eastern South Dakota. And so I was a federal employee, and then they come around and said, "Well, the state is gonna take over the program east-river." Well, I guess there was openings in other states where I could have gone, but I thought, "Well, I'll just go to work for Game, Fish, and Parks, and trap for them," and then I could stay right where I was at. I worked for them for about three years, and then I decided to go back with Fish and Wildlife Service just on a temporary summer-type work. I worked different places in the summer. I spent two summers in Minnesota working with wolves and a couple summers in western South Dakota.

And then in the wintertime I trap for fur, because I have my own time then. In 1981, I decided to go back full-time, and that's when I went to North Dakota.

(So you had worked for the state before then again?)

I worked for the state in-between. I worked for the state, uh, oh, in '71 to '73, in there, I think it was.

(What was the difference between the two agencies?)

Actually, we did the same thing, the same type of work. And the state, you know, decided that they would want to supervise animal damage control, which is—it didn't make any difference to me. And then eventually, the west-river became under state Game, Fish, and Parks jurisdiction, too, and today it's a state-run program here in South Dakota. But anyway, I worked for 'em I think nearly three years and then I decided, well, the fur price was really coming up, in the late '70s, and I thought, "Well, I'm quite sure that I can work for the Fish and Wildlife Service in the summertime," because there's always extra work in the summer. So I decided to do that and then trap for the fur in the winter, which was great. I had a great time doing that, got in on these real high furriers, you know. And it was great for me, because I knew the country, you know, and pretty much where the animals were. And I did—it was fun. Foxes and coyotes and everything got so high, you know, in the late '70s. I'll never see that again at my age. But it was fantastic.

27:40
And then, like I say, in the summertime, I spent I think it was two summers in western South Dakota and two summers in northern Minnesota, and then I went back full-time in January of '81.

(What did you do in Minnesota with wolves?)

Minnesota, the first summer I was up there, it was 1977, and they were still on the endangered list, and classified "endangered" in Minnesota. I moved them, I live-trapped them and moved them. They were eating—they were killing livestock, sheep, hogs, cattle. And what I would do, I would get a call from the St. Paul office, that was the state office of, well, Wildlife Services, it wasn't Wildlife Services that time, but it was Fish and Wildlife Service, and they would tell me where this farm was where they was having wolf problems and I would go check it out. So I would stay right there until I caught the wolf because the regulations were to set the traps seven days a week every morning, first thing. And, uh, so I'd just go to the nearest town and get a motel room and stay there, and sometimes I'd catch the wolf in a few days, and sometimes it

would take two weeks. And the wolf (chuckles) is not hard to capture, but they didn't come back very often. A lot of times when then wolf would come back, there would be a non-target animal in the trap, like a raccoon or a coyote or something. Well, the wolf would—you'd catch—normally, if your trap was in working order when the wolf would come back, you would catch him. They were not that hard to capture. But it was keeping the other stuff out of the traps that was the greatest thing. I'm sure there are some wolves that are difficult to capture, but my experience of just two summers was that they're not too hard to capture.

29:43
(And these were live traps?)

No, they were regular foot traps. We had—we was using #4 Newhouse traps with offset jaws, and we had some #14 Newhouse with offset, with teeth. We'd check 'em like, first thing in the morning, and then I carried cages with me, and I would tranquilize the wolf and—I had quite a few measurements they wanted me to do. I'd measure the teeth and I'd weigh 'em. I even took blood samples and I carried ice with me and all that to keep the blood cool. And then I would put the wolf in a cage. I had about a half hour to do all this stuff before they'd start waking up. So I worked pretty fast. So I'd put him in the cage and then I'd take him to a farm, probably the farm where I was trapping, and put the cage inside of a building and—they wanted me to hold the wolf overnight so I could observe him in the morning, make sure he was all right before I—we released 'em in the Canoe Boundary Waters area of northern Minnesota. It was I guess probably the only federal land, because the state didn't want 'em back on their land, and you sure didn't want to turn 'em back loose on somebody's farm. Because these were things that had been eating cows and calves and sheep.

So then I would—the next day, if the wolf seemed to be all right, I'd load him in the pickup and I would take him and turn him loose, which was very controversial with the farmers, when, you know, they would hear that we were turning these wolves loose, because the bad part of this thing is, some of those wolves would come back to the same place, and, you know, it was pretty hard to explain to a farmer why you're doing this when they're eating calves and the same wolf comes back and starts eating 'em over again. So that was in '77, and then during—from '77 to '78 they changed the status to "threatened." And then as a threatened status, then the next year, then we destroyed those wolves that were involved in this, which we should have done the first year, because then we wouldn't 'a had this thing coming back.

You see, the wolf—it's just like an old dog. If you took him away from home a hundred miles and turn him out, he'd head right home. And one of the places when we were trapping wolves that was having a lot of trouble was only sixty miles from the release sector. Because all our wolves were released in the same area. And I know one wolf, it was only three days from the time we caught her one time until we caught her the next time. And it was sixty miles away.

32:31
(Now, explain to me a little bit about how you would know which wolf was doing the killing of the livestock?)

Well, they were—actually, most of these wolves that were involved were two-year-old males that their—I don't understand the wolf pack thing too well, but I guess when they get to be two years old, they're chased out by the alpha male. So most of these wolves were loaners that would

show up. Actually, they were the only wolf right in there where—very seldom—I think I only worked on one case where there was a pair, and they had three pups, and I caught those. But most of them were lone wolves, and they were adults, but they were young adults. So you usually got—if you'd catch an adult male wolf right close to where the problem was, you were pretty sure you had the right animal. And then, of course, if there was no more losses, well, you knew you had the right one.

(So I'm curious. If you had about a half hour between—the summer you had to move the wolves, if you had about a half hour between tranquilizing and doing all this work and getting him in the cage, did any ever wake up? I'm very curious about that.) (laughs)

Yes, I had quite an experience one time. It was kind of a cream-colored wolf, a light-colored wolf, I remember. And I—I carried her over my shoulders out to the road there. They usually get hung up with the trap, dragged off maybe less than a hundred yards. I laid her down on the edge of this old Forest Service trail. And I was taking blood out of the femoral artery that wraps around the back leg there. She was laying there, and I got my stuff out. And of course, what I would do, when I'd give them the tranquilizer—I was still smoking cigarettes then. I'm glad I quit that habit. But I'd give them a shot and then I would smoke a cigarette, and by the time I was done, I'd figure it was safe to work on the wolf. So I would take my hat and I'd pass back and forth in front of their eyes, and if their eyes couldn't follow my hat, I'd go to work.

34:46
Well, anyway, I was taking this blood out of this work. I was down there, you know, by the hind leg, and all of a sudden this wolf just raised up and looked right at me. I went over to the pickup. I think I had some masking tape, and I taped the jaws shut. I mean, it was just a reflex thing from the—I mean, it wasn't gonna get me or anything, but just the reflex from the needle going in there, it just kind of sat up and looked at me. I thought, "Well, this doesn't look good at all." So I taped the jaws shut and went back to work. And she didn't come out of it, but—like I say, I had about a half hour. Then they would start kind of moving around, so it'd make it hard to work on 'em.

But I had to weigh 'em, too. I had a spring scale and I would put 'em—hang that on a—usually there were some small trees around there and I'd hang this. I'd have a stick and I'd hoist them up and weigh 'em, right there when I had—do a lot of things when they're out, you know. But it was an interesting—I really enjoyed it. I'm sure not an expert on wolves, but I learned a little bit.

(I bet, because you probably didn't do any wolf work here.)

Oh, no. I had another experience with wolves. Like I say, I'd hold 'em overnight and move 'em the next day. Well, I had put this wolf—he was killing hogs for this fella. It was a large male, which they all were. And I said, "I want to hold this wolf overnight." And he said, "Why don't you put him in the granary over there? Put the cage in the granary?" So I thought, "That's a good idea." So I put him there.

The next morning, the first thing I headed back to this farm and was gonna pick up my wolf, and the guy was standing out there with a shotgun by the granary. And he said, "He's loose in there." Well, what had happened, this fella was gonna get some feed out of the granary the next morning and he opened the door and here was the wolf just inside the door. He'd chewed through the

cage, and he was loose in the granary. I thought, "Well, now I've really got a problem. I've got this wolf that I gotta move him live and I don't dare shoot him and he's loose in the granary." You know, it makes you wonder, "Why do I do here now?" But this guy said, "Well," he said, "if he's gonna chew through the wall, I'm gonna shoot him," he said, "because I don't want him to kill any more pigs." And I could kind of understand his deal there, too. (chuckles)

37:03
So anyway, I thought, "Well—" I just opened—I walked up there and opened the door just a crack, and he stood right there and he saw this light coming through and there were some sacks of feed, full sacks of feed piled against the wall. They were about four feet tall. As I opened the door, he jumped up on them and stood there. He was about as worried as I was, you know?

So right away I went over to my vehicle and I got my jab stick and my tranquilizer stuff, and he was still there. I opened the door and I shoved this in and I was able to stick the tranquilizer in his hip right there from the door. Just lucky. It just worked out perfect. And I had an extra cage with me, and put him in another cage and moved him. But that was—I'll never forget that experience, this guy, this farmer standing there with his shotgun. He wasn't gonna let him get away. (chuckles)

(Clearly not.) (laughs) (He was gonna make sure that thing didn't kill any more hogs.)

Yeah, yeah. He's losing hogs. I think he was the only one I had losing hogs, but calves were quite common, and sheep. The wolf, though, apparently his main diet is white-tailed deer, because we used to check the droppings. I'd find that most of them had white-tailed deer hair in 'em. And some of 'em had beaver fur, 'cause they must have been able to capture beaver away from the pond at times. But it seemed like anything like that, get involved with livestock, they find out it's so easy and they stay at it, and you've got to do something.

38:35
(So in 1981, then, you went to North Dakota. And after all your work in South Dakota, what prompted the move?)

Well, I, uh, you know, I really enjoyed my winters off when I was trapping for fur. But the fur prices started to decline, and I thought, "Well, I'm getting older, and this is my career, this animal damage work. I better get back full-time, you know, and get my years in." I knew the state director of North Dakota, I'd worked with him. I knew several of the state directors from the early days. A lot of them had moved on from trappers and they were state directors now. And I talked to him one day, and he said, "Well, we may have an opening coming up."

I got a call. I had quite a few traps out. I was fur trapping in the winter of '80-'81 there, and I got a call in December and he said, "We're gonna have an opening," he said, "in January, and if you want it, you'll have to get up here, because President Reagan's gonna put a freeze on hiring, and we have to get our people in." And so I was—I wanted to take the job, and I had all these traps out, so I worked practically night and day getting these traps up, because I sure didn't want to go to North Dakota and still have traps set. So I—the ones that I couldn't pull the stakes, I sprung 'em off and then I came back, you know, in a couple weeks and picked 'em up. I went to North Dakota kind of fast. I knew I was gonna go, but I didn't—they had told me it was gonna be

April, and then all of a sudden it was January. (chuckles) So I was kind of anticipating April. (laughs) But that's how—when I went to North Dakota, that's how I happened to get there.

40:24
(And where in North Dakota?)

I was at Steele, North Dakota, which is near Bismarck. It's about forty miles east of Bismarck. And I was assigned five counties right there around that area. It was a great, great area. I really enjoyed it up there. Summers were great. The winters were a little bit more severe than they are here in South Dakota, but they weren't that bad. Got to know a lot of great people.

(What type of work did you do up there?)

I did mainly the same thing. It was mainly coyote work, and we did some beaver work, and then we did quite a lot of waterfall damage, took care of waterfall damage complaints, which was new to me. Of course, I knew waterfall from South Dakota, but they didn't seem to cause the problem that they did in North Dakota. Because up there they still wind-rowed a lot of their wheat, and I come from a country where it was all pretty much straight combined. And the wind rows, you know, you got these thousands and thousands of ducks come in on these wind rows and just destroy it in a matter of a few days. So we got involved in that.

Then in later years, as time went on, four or five years after I got up there, we got involved with blackbird work, too, in sunflowers. That was—took up a lot of our time from, say, August through till they got 'em combined. And so some things that were new to me were the bird work, waterfall depredation, and blackbirds. But I kind of—I was—one reason I really liked this type of work I did all these years is diversified, you know. I hadn't done anything like that. It was kind of fun. Interesting.

(Yes. All your coyote work, um, well, actually I'm gonna wait to ask that question, 'cause that comes up a little later, so I'm gonna save that. You were telling me about the various state directors that you worked with before we started the tape recorder, and also various people that, like, rode with you and worked with you that went on. Can you talk a little bit about that?)

42:51
Well, I—you know, being that many years in this type of work, I got to know a lot of people and a lot of different state directors. One, for instance, that I got to know pretty well was Bill Clay. He was state director in North Dakota for a time. And Bill and I used to hunt geese together at times. And had a great time with Bill. In fact, I was fairly close to Bismarck, and it was good waterfall hunting areas, so it was handy for him to come over. Some of the other directors, I was trying to think who I knew over the years. A lot of 'em. Like—some of 'em are still working, like Larry Andergart was my state director, he's in Montana yet, I think. And, oh, Bill Pfeiffer is retired. He was in Bismarck. In fact, Bill was the person that hired me. When I went back into full-time work in '81, Bill was state director in North Dakota at that time. I'm trying to think of anybody else that—but anyway, there's—I know quite a few of 'em. Most of the people I worked with, most of them are retired, you know. And Kurt Gustad you mentioned him, Kurt was up there I forget what years it was and spent I know one summer, did some work with Kurt on—one case was I know muskrat damage, he'd probably remember that. Muskrats were

undermining a road in Logan County. It was pretty serious. The road was startin' to cave in and it was very dangerous and so we had to remove quite a few muskrats. Kurt helped me with that.

44:54
(Um, when did you retire?)

Uh, I retired in January of '96, and I moved down here to this little place here in April.

(And when you retired, you had been working in North Dakota for that time, from '81 to '96?)

Yeah. '81 to '96. Sixteen years up there. I went there in January of '81 and retired in January—well, it'll be fifteen years.

(Now, some retirees, I've noticed, retire and then keep working for the program on a summer basis, or they volunteer. Did you do any of that, or did you quit?)

No, I didn't. I thought about it for a couple of years. I did work for, you know, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Service Agencies on this best management practices. I did that for four falls, testing coyote traps for the western coyote. But that was just, like, three weeks in the fall. And that project with the coyote is finished, and I did that. But as far as going back and working for USDA, I haven'the done that. I still do quite a little trapping in the wintertime for fur, but not any damage—I—once in a while I help out a local rancher here, you know, if he has a coyote problem. I still have my dogs. The dogs I had when I was working have died now, but I still have some of their offspring, and I use those decoy dogs. I still have purebred Airedales and I used them a lot when I was working.

46:45
(So you used them when you worked for the program?)

Oh, yes. That's how I really got a pretty good, you know, blood line of dogs, because I've tried different ones. When I retired I still had two. I had this one female, and a lot of people wanted to know if I was gonna raise any pups, so I decided—I raise about one litter a year. And I still do, but I've got second and third generations now, you know. But oh, yeah, they were a great help to me, in the coyote work especially.

(Describe how you use them in the coyote work.)

Well, you know, a coyote is very territorial. When I would have a complaint on coyotes, most of the complaints were spring and summer on lambs. And normally, just about all the time, when coyotes are taking lambs, it's a family group and they're feeding puppies somewhere. And so I would figure out about where they were by tracks and stuff, and what direction, and then I would go in there with a dog or two early in the morning, you know, and try to—stay concealed and get in there and then just the dogs loose and pretty soon the coyotes would show up because they don't want any dogs around 'em, around these pups. They get very aggressive. And I'd have the dogs trained, you know, they'd come back to me and the coyotes would follow them. And it was kind of a game with them. The Airedale is a little bit more aggressive than you need to be, but eventually the dog is tired. The dog would chase the coyote and then the coyote would chase the dog and pretty soon the dog would get tired of the game, but the coyote would never get tired,

and then he'd just follow the dog back to me and then I'd bring him into gun range and I'd shoot it. And that was real—it worked real well, I mean, because like I say, pretty near all the complaints—I would say a very high percentage of complaints are animals that are feeding pups. You take during the months of May, June, July, dogs are just fantastic. By August, the young coyotes are kind of out on their own and they don't have this guarding instinct like they do early. I figured it out once. The month of June was my—it seemed like when the coyotes were the most aggressive towards dogs. They would just—of course you had to watch. You didn't want your dogs overpowered. I know one time I was moved in around a den area and there was seven adults. So I kept the dog on a leash, because I didn't want the dog to get out too far, 'cause Airedale's a pretty tough dog, but I figured seven would be a little unfair. (laughs)

(That might be too much.)

Yeah, that was a little too much. I didn't expect that much, but they would get mixed up with three many times, you know. (chuckles)

(And you used them while you were working for the program?)

Oh, yes. They were with me all the time. Yeah. I always had one dog along and a lot of times two dogs. Sometimes a trap would be pulled, a stake would be pulled or dragged. I didn't use very many drags, but I just turned a dog loose and they got onto it. I'd go where the trap was and the trap'd be missing and they would just start an arc until they got downwind and then they would just—they'd pick up the scent and you could see right away when they crossed the scent and then they'd backcross it and then they'd go straight into it.

(And then you could find the coyote?)

50:15
Oh, yeah. And sometimes they would—well, usually it would be, you'd look around where the nearest brush is. Maybe there would be some chokecherry bushes or wild plum bushes or something, and you could bet the dog'd be headin' for that, because that's where the coyote would be tangled up in there. But there were a great help. I found many, many animals with those dogs.

(pause) (Now, you had mentioned, before we get off on your retirement too much, you had mentioned that you had done some work with the Research Center, some work in the '60s. Could you describe that a little bit?)

Yeah. Well, one of the things I recall was with the tranquilizer trap tabs. At that time Don Balser was kind of working with this. And the state office then was at Mitchell. I know I attended a meeting there when Don had came out to Mitchell. Mark Wooster was district agent and Don came out. I was trying to think of the assistant. Don Donahoo was assistant. And I—they taught us how to make these tabs. We got the powder and how to make 'em and fasten 'em to the trap. I did that for all—well, one winter I used quite a few of 'em. And then I would just write down all my information I'd gathered, you know, send it in to the office and send it on to Don. I don't think they ever did start using them regularly, but I was in on some of the initial work on that. And they were—it was interesting to—I'd take the—and the animals, they wanted to know how long this'd last. So I would take 'em home with me and put 'em in the garage. It seemed like it

would take about twenty-four hours until they got to crawling the walls in there, you know. But it'd last quite a while. It was really potent stuff. I would carry them around under my arms, you know, and I'd have 'em in the pickup. People couldn't understand. They'd never seen a coyote like that acting so tame. (laughs)

52:37
(And you described a picture.)

Oh, yeah, I had a picture of one with—I had him laying on the hood of the pickup and my hand on top of his head. You know, there's no trap evident or leash or anything. People can't understand how I could get one that tame. (laughs)

(Explain a little bit how the tranquilizer tab worked with the trap.)

OK. You would wire the—well, how made these, and I think everybody else did, we had cheesecloth and we'd fold that three or four times and then we would take and put something that—this tranquilizer was in a powder form, so we would smear on, I think I used mineral oil. I'd put on this cheesecloth and sprinkle this powder on there, and then I would roll it up so it was, oh, about a long as a cigarette and probably that diameter and roll it up. Then I would take and take a little piece of stovepipe or a real fine wire and put it around the center of it. And then I would bend it back, like that, bend it back around that wire and I would dip it in melted paraffin wax. And then—the reason for the wire on there, you would wire this directly to the trap jaw, and you'd wire—when the trap—you got the trigger of the trap, so I'd always put the tab between the trigger and the chain end. And it seemed like when a coyote would get in the trap he'd kind of chew on the trap. That was the object of the trap tab on the jaw. When chewing on the trap, he would get this stuff in his saliva and get it into him.

54:22
It was pretty effective—apparently it was pretty potent, because, you know, they never got it all, but they would be out, completely out. And probably one of the reasons why they didn't follow up on that, you wouldn't want to use that in severe weather. If the animal was incapacitated like that, you know, in case you might have a non-target, you know, the animal would succumb to freezing. So in nice weather it was all right, but I can see in cold—I never had any problem like that because I would check 'em pretty regular, but when the animal's jumping around, you know, there's circulation going, but when he's laying there, I think in cold weather it would be kind of bad. But they did work, and I was kind of sorry to see that they didn't follow up with them, because they were effective.

(So you recorded all the information?)

Yeah, I sent it in to our Mitchell office and then it was sent on to Don, I think. I think there was three or four of us using that, using those tabs. But yeah, stuff like that was very interesting. I was trying to think of anything else that I—of course, we tested—when we went from the—the coyote-getter—when we went from M-38 old-style coyote-getter to the M-44, there was a whole lot of testing there. And I got in on that because I was in—I was working at the time when they stopped using the 38s, and they had a lot of problems with this M-44 to start with. Now, when I retired nine years ago, they were really becoming quite effective. Now I think they've improved 'em some more. They're working great now.

56:06
(So did you use a lot of—I mean, it sounds like you used various methods to trap.)

Oh, yes. I used everything available to me, you know, from traps and dogs and airplanes, somewhat, didn't use the airplane too much, but at times I would get the airplane in there, but yeah, I used a lot of methods. I used some snares, not a lot of snares, but I did use some in holes in fences and stuff where coyotes were coming in.

(What did you like best about your work?)

Well, I don't—I guess just getting out and being with nature. I met some great people, but I got to see things that very few people get a chance to see, you know, just things that happen out there. If you're out there every day, eventually you're gonna see pretty near everything. You know, there's some things you might miss, but you see some things that are fantastic, like coyotes—I've actually seen three coyotes get in traps, you know, just watching, and stuff like that. Normally you'd never see anything like that. Watching animals around dens and how they take care of their puppies and stuff. I know I used to set and watch dens with binoculars early in the morning and try to figure out where the adults are and see the pups. I never could figure out, you had all these little puppies about six weeks old and they'd be sitting there and they'd all be looking one way. I'd get the binoculars out and way off in the distance, here would come two old coyotes, and how these pups knew where they were coming from. I mean, they would be a half a mile away or more, and those puppies knew right where they were.

58:02
(And you could probably barely see them.)

I could just barely see 'em with binoculars.

(That's pretty fantastic.)

Yeah, it is. You know, nature's got things built into these animals that we'll never understand. That was one thing. But I think probably enjoying the dens and stuff, but as far as the job, just being out there and seeing things in nature and meeting some great people, you know, just the ranchers and farmers and even city people, where I'd help with bird work and stuff around there, it was a great bunch.

(What did you like least about your work?)

Well, (pause) I gotta think a while on that. There was some, uh, (pause) some—I guess once in a while you'd run into some things that probably didn't work the way you wanted to, but not too often. Most people were fairly, uh, you know, they were happy to have the help and stuff. Once in a while you'd run into someone that was maybe kinda hard to really do the right job for 'em, but they were in the minority. As far as anything else, I didn't have any problem with the work at all. I—in fact, I enjoyed when Monday morning came so I could get back out there. You know, a lot of people, they don't like Monday mornings, but Monday morning was one of my favorite times, to get back to work. (chuckles) But no, there was very little downside of the work, even being out in all kinds of weather and stuff like that, I still enjoyed it.

59:59
(You mentioned that you liked Mondays. Did you take a lot of vacations, take a lot of time off?)

Well, not too much. I think back, I should have taken more time off. It seemed like I'd lose vacation. In the later years when I worked, of course, we had comp time because over the—you know, so you always had some comp time and use that, so you'd end up at the end of the year with quite a little vacation time, so sometimes I would lose vacation, which—that's hard for some people to understand, but I guess if you enjoy what you're doing it's not so hard to understand. (chuckles) But I kind of feel guilty in a way. When the kids were little, I wished I woulda taken a little bit more time, taken 'em places, you know. I had four kids. But no, it was a great life. It's just—a lot of fun things happened, interesting.

(What did you find the most challenging about your work?)

Oh, (pause) I guess some of the—what's really gratifying is when you can solve some problem that somebody had had for quite a while and they just had kinda given up and maybe you could figure out how to remedy it for 'em, you know. And that to me was very gratifying. You know, I—of course, I run into problems, too. One thing, working with an animal damage control at that time, you had all these other people that were working in the state, and usually someone had had that experience, so you could contact 'em and learn. And I had to—I did that many times, especially in the younger years, you know, when I first started out. That was—like I say, I think solving some of these problems that they didn't think could be solved was probably the greatest.

62:04
(Can you think of one of those problems that was like very, very challenging and then when you figured it out was extremely satisfying?)

Well, let me see. Let me think a while. (long pause) I know there's quite a few, but—well, some of the animals, in fact, some of the coyotes that were really tough to get, you know, that they'd been after for a long time, and sometimes you'd just get lucky, you know. Of course, you always thought it was just skill, but you had to have a lot of luck, too, you know. And we—I know one time, and I've got a picture of this animal somewhere, I had this coyote killing lambs in a pasture that was near Crystal Springs, North Dakota, it was north of Crystal Springs. And I was havin' quite a time catchin' him. I hadn't caught him, but I'd been workin' on him for about two weeks. But he'd still get into the pasture and get a lamb, you know, or a couple lambs.

One morning I got a call from a person that said that he knew I was a trapper and working out there. He said, "I came along the road this morning," he said, "and there was a coyote in the fence." He said, "He musta got in a snare or something," and he said, "I shot it." I said, "Well, good." I said, "I can't remember that that would be where I had a snare, but I'll go out there." This was really amazing. What happened is, this coyote had came into this pasture. He didn't have any set pattern, that's why I think he'd been so hard to capture. But he was jumping over a woven-wire fence and there was two—a lot of people stretch two barbed wires on top of the woven wire. Anyway, he'd killed this lamb, and it was a small lamb, and he was taking it back apparently to the den, which they don't do very often. Usually they eat it and regurgitate it. But this old coyote was taking the whole lamb.

Anyway, I didn't have him in a snare or anything. He jumped the fence and his back leg got caught in the wire and he got hung up there. And so here—like a deer, their leg goes through and then the wire turns that way, so they're pinned. It was a fitting end for this coyote, for sure. Anyway, what he'd do, his feet could barely touch the ground, because this fence was like five feet. And you could see where he'd just been clawing around there with his front feet, and the lamb laid right there, was what had happened. And I thought, "This is really ironic, you know, to get this real tough coyote, and he did himself in." (chuckles) That's one thing I'll never forget. But when the guy called, I said, I thought to myself, "I don't have a snare in that area, but I better get out and check this right away anyway." (laughs)

(And there the coyote was.)

There was the coyote. He'd shot him. And of course, he thought his leg was in a snare, but it wasn't. It was just caught in the fence. (laughs) That was one thing I can recall up there that was different, completely different than anything I'd ever had happen. But there's, you know, there's a lot of things that—that's one thing, I guess, that made the job so interesting. There were no—no two days were the same, you know. They weren't. There was just something different all the time.

65:45
(What was the most difficult social or political situation that you found yourself in, and how did you get out of it?)

OK. Uh, I think that there were some people, probably ranchers, and I'm not gonna say anything against ranchers 'cause they're great people, but there were certain—seemed like some people that thought if—you know, you had this large expanse you were responsible for, and there was always—seemed like there would be maybe one or two in there that thought that you should probably come to their place first because they were such large landowners and they had all this livestock that it made their problems maybe more important than the other guy. And of course, I—by talking to some of the old-timers when I went to work, they told me that you gotta treat everybody the same, which is what you would normally do.

Anyway, sometimes that would kind of cause a little bit of hard feelings, but I would say, "Well, I'll be to your place day after tomorrow, because right now I'm busy." And I just, you know, they kind of thought maybe you should just maybe drop everything and go there, you know. And I treated the people, if they just had a few livestock or if they had several hundred, the same. You had to, you know. I know one time I had a guy call me up and he said, "The coyotes got into my sheep last night." He said—this really has really nothin' to do with what I was talking about before, but he said, "The coyotes got into my sheep last night and really caused a lot of damage." And I said, "Well, how many did they kill?" He said, "One." And I said, "Well, how many sheep do you have?" He said, "Nine." (laughs) So percentage-wise, this was really serious. (laughs)

(This was a big problem.) (laughs)

Yeah, but anyway, most of 'em were very understanding, you know, that you had to kind of take things as they go, you know. Unless there was a problem with human safety. Like, I talked about the muskrats undermining the road, or beaver would do the same thing, where a car could come along and fall in this hole and cause a severe accident. Well, then you'd get right out there, I

mean, everything went on hold then if it was a safety factor. But as far as the livestock loss, we'd try to take 'em as they come.

68:25
And you'd work on several at a time. I mean, you know, you may have two or three ranches you're working on at one time. Even with the wolves, I said before I would stay right there until I caught the wolf, but if I had a couple complaints that were, like, thirty, forty miles apart, I'd take care of 'em both at one time. It works out pretty good that. You just had to kind of judge your distance, you know.

(What was one of the funniest things that happened to you while handling or capturing animals?)

(pause) Let me see. Well, I guess the wolf looking at me when I was taking blood out of it, uh, was funny. It was kind of scary at the time. But I recall that one. I'm trying to think of something else. It'll probably come to me. (pause) Oh, there was just a lot of fun things happened. (long pause) I can't think of anything right now. It'll probably come to me later.

(Well, and I could ask the next question and if you think of funniest, let me know. What was one of the scariest things? You mentioned the wolf. Was there another one that was scary at the time?)

Well, yeah, sometimes—I've had—I used to do a little flying, you know.

(The aerial gunning?)

Aerial gunning. I was an aerial gunner. In North Dakota we did our own gunning, each one of us was responsible. And I used to fly about, oh, probably, in the summertime, maybe once or twice a month, you know. And I always had good pilots. But once in a while, being inexperienced in the ways of aviation, well, sometimes I would, uh, maybe didn't think it was quite safe, but it was safe. I know when I first—when I came from South Dakota, they had full-time gunners. And when I got to North Dakota, well, then each trapper would do his own gunning in his area, which I like real well, because you could really learn your area, you could kind of see how the land lays and everything like that. So I had to do a lot more gunning than I was used to, and flying was, you know, it was quite new to me as far as gunning. I had done some in South Dakota, but very little.

71:13
I don't know, I just, I got so I was a very effective gunner as the years went on and I kinda enjoyed it. I don't think I would like that job doing it every day, but once or twice a month you could really look your area over. And I guess—one of the nicest things about the job was early in the morning in the plane, not shooting at things, just looking the country over about sunrise, just beautiful, you know. There's no wind and you see all these deer and you see so many things, you know, out there. It's just great. I got to observe that. Just fantastic. But really, we never had—when I was gunning, we never had any really, you know, close calls or anything like that, because the pilots were all very safety-conscious and stuff like that. No problem that way there. There had been some different accidents, you know, in different states and stuff, but I was never involved in anything like that.

(Describe what you did as an aerial gunner.)

72:25
OK. Well, what I would do, say if I probably had a coyote that was really, really getting destructive and I was having a hard time catching him, well, we just had one airplane available in North Dakota. The Service just has their own one plane. So you couldn't get it every time. But if it was available, I would call 'em and we would go into the area where the losses were taking place. You want to work in close, because coyotes are very territorial. They don't go in somebody else's area.

What I would do is, we'd try to get in there early in the morning, just about sunrise, or shortly after sunrise. And then I'd always start—the pilot knew this, too, but all the trappers did, too—start on the east side of the area where the losses were and then we'd just what we called "strip it out," just move over maybe a quarter of a mile and fly in transects back and forth. (pause) Well, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself.

The first thing I'd do when I'd get into an area where they were losing lambs, I would tell the pilot, "Let's go and circle the sheep." 'Cause sometimes you would catch the coyote right in the sheep. So I would—we'd circle the sheep, make sure he wasn't in there. So then we knew he was leaving—most of the time he was coming. If we'd fly in and look these sheep over and they were all bunched up, then right away you knew something was wrong down there. And at different times over the years, these sheep'd be all bunched up, and off to the side here'd be a coyote eating on a fresh lamb that he just killed, you know. That always made my day, because that was really selective control. Then there was no doubt you got the right one.

So we'd come around, circle back around, and then have the sun on our back and come in low where this coyote was eating on this lamb. A lot of times before you'd get there he would stop what he was doing and take off running. But it'd be too late. You'd get him. But I know over the years there was three or four times where I'd come in there and the coyote would have his nose way into the ribcage of the lamb and when he'd look up, you could see the blood line way up to his eyes. That's about the time you'd shoot, you know.

I don't enjoy killing things, but that kind of made my day because I thought, "Boy, you can't get any more selective than this!" (chuckles) But anyway, the aerial gunning was very effective in the early part of the summer. Later in the summer, if you got diversified farming, where you've got sunflowers and corn, then your animal's in cover right away. But it's an early-morning thing, and you fly about sunrise, maybe for the first couple hours after sunrise, and they you'd just as well go home, because once it gets hot, coyotes'd be in the shade. They just do this thing early in the morning. And a lot of 'em come at night.

I discovered over the years that—I kind of studied this a lot, and I'm fairly convinced that there's a certain amount of coyotes that don't move at all in daylight hours. You know, not a lot of 'em, but there's some, so you would never find 'em with an airplane. Because they'd be underground, even in the winter. I found these places where they're living, you know, where there's just tracks around the whole—because many times when I've been flying, we'd be lookin' for this coyote, and all of a sudden he'd be running right at us, which he should be running the other way. And I discovered years ago that why they're running at us, his hole, his hideout where he wants to be is between us and him. And most of the time they would beat you to it and they'd just dive in there.

76:27
Well, those kind of coyotes, they never leave that during the daytime. A lot of 'em I've seen when you fly over 'em, they're just laying there with their nose stickin' out. And they just do their thing at then when it gets dark, a really smart animal, you know. (chuckles) But many times they'd be running at us, and I'd tell the pilot, I said, "I hope we get there before he does!" (laughs)

(I'm going to stop the recorder now because I need to switch tapes.)

OK.
75:56 end of File 1

File 2
00:00
(This is CD #2 for the interview with Odon Corr on July 9th, 2005. And we're gonna pick up with talking about lures, your favorite lure recipe.)

(pause)

(Did you have a specific one?)

Yes, I, like a lot of the other government trappers, we concocted our own things through trial and error and of course, when I went to work, there was a lot of recipes, you know, that had been tried and some were good and some were not good. And then I found out different ingredients from older trappers. One thing about the job I had, you were always out there in all kinds of temperature every month of the year. So you could test—there's a lot of lures that will work certain times of the year and they won't work other times of the year, depending on humidity and temperature. And then we're always looking for this super-lure that'll work twelve months out of the year, which there isn't such a thing, I guess.

But I came up with a couple of originals and then some that I had altered that were old government recipes. There's a lot of old recipes available of early-day trappers. Coyotes—mainly what we're after are lures to attract the coyote, because he's one animal that we spend most of our time with. Beaver lure, it's very easy to make beaver lure, because they're just interested in the castor smell of another beaver. But coyotes, they have—two things that actually attract a coyote are the natural smell of other coyotes, like from his glands or urine, or the food smell. So you've got two types of lures. One's made out of a food type and one's made out of natural ingredients like glands and urine and stuff like that. It all depends on what time of the year, one kind of overpowers the other one. And sometimes you use both of them.

02:23
Well, for the M-44s, that is strictly a food-type thing, because you want 'em to grab ahold of the M-44 and pull on it. That's what gets 'em. So you've gotta have something—you don't want 'em to come up to an M-44 and just urinate on it and go on. Like, you know, if you got the wrong kind of bait, that's what'll happen. So you gotta have a food lure that they want to grab ahold of. And I came up with some over the years. The main thing, I think, in finding a good lure is coming up with a proper base. What I mean by "base" is the main ingredient that you mix these

other essential oils with. Some people—one of the basic—cat meat is good, like we'd take, like, bobcat carcasses, take the meat off 'em. Cats is good. And horsemeat is good. One of my favorite things to use is horsemeat.

And another thing that I used a lot of is brains from deer, elk if I was in elk country, go to where they process wild game and get the brains and stuff. And so there's three different bases there. You wouldn't mix them all together. But you have different oils that you'd add to 'em, like different exotic oils of—oh, there's different things. I can't think of some right now, like maybe tonquin musk, which is real hard to get. There's different musks and stuff you add to these bases. But getting the proper base—and most of these lure bases have to be aged. I'd grind 'em—like, horsemeat, I'll grind that and put it in like plastic, those big five- or six-gallon pails and snap-on lid and bury 'em for about a year, deep, I mean below the frost line, five or six feet, and it'll break down just naturally and it'll turn—that's your base and then you add oils into that.

The same thing with cat meat or—fish doesn't take quite that long to break down. I kinda stayed away from a fish base, mainly because cattle were so inquisitive around that smell, and they'd come around and tromp around your sets if you had it in your sets in a big open pasture, you've got a cow tromping around there, you know, and springing your traps off. It don't hurt the cow, but it springs your traps. So that's one reason I kind of stayed away from the fish smell. But horse meat is hard to beat, and cat meat. I've used some beaver meat, with some success, but, uh, that's—like I say, the two different attractors, I'm talking about coyotes now mainly, is the attraction to a food smell and a natural smell of their own kind. Because of the territorial thing is why the natural smell is so great, because they gotta just check that out.

I used to keep a live coyote a lot and catch my own urine from him. Now I do very little trapping from what I used to do, so I buy urine from a reputable place. But you take a—and I discovered over the years that the urine from an adult male coyote seemed to be much more attractive. You know, you'd think, what's the difference? It's coyote urine. And I've tried it from pups, because you get these pups out of a den, you put the pups in a cage, and you thought, "Well, we gotta get the urine." Very good—very little response to that. Or female urine. Some people told me when I first went to work you want to get a female when she's in the heat cycle. Well, here you've got about three weeks out of a year to get that female, and that didn't make sense either.

But I discovered over the years that the urine from an adult male is really—they really check that out. Because, I mean, they don't want another adult male in their area. They may allow lesser males or, you know, they'll allow other females, but no more old males. And so that's—in the lure thing, that's what I would say is the most important thing, is good quality coyote urine and good food base and good natural base lure.

(For coyotes?)

For coyotes. Beavers, uh, beavers are another thing that I used to lure in. Beavers have two scent glands on 'em. They call 'em castors. If you take that stuff outa there, it kinda looks like—after you dry it and grind it up, it kinda looks like instant coffee in a jar. And then I add—just add some glycerin or something with it and make kind of a paste out of it. That's another thing that's very territorial is a beaver. You put that on a stick along the shore where your trap is, and normally when they're swimming up the river or creek, they'll turn right into that and check it out. They think another beaver's invaded their area.

07:21
(What about wolf?)

On the wolf, yeah, excuse me. (takes drink of water) That was one thing, when I went up there to trap wolves, I didn't have any idea of how to catch a wolf. I'd read all these stories of the early-day wolves and how hard they were to catch, and I thought, "Well, I'll never catch one of these things." And I was kind of overly cautious, just too cautious. I found out the other two wolf trappers, they were just takin' and buryin' a lot of times road kill that they'd find on the road, a woodchuck or a rabbit or something, and burying it in pine needles and catching these wolves. They were fairly easy to capture.

Well, I wanted to get some wolf urine, because I'd had good luck with fresh coyote urine. So then the other—Bill Paul, who's still working up there, he's a wolf guy in Minnesota, and he said, "Well, just—" you know, we'd hold these wolves overnight, so we just put a piece of tin under there so we'd catch fresh urine from that wolf before we'd move him. Then we had enough fresh urine to go to the next one. So it was just an endless chain. It worked real good that way. But it's pretty hard to beat the territorial thing of the canines with fresh urine. I mean, it's—and one thing, in the summertime when we were trapping coyotes in all those years, you had your very dry conditions and hardly any humidity. So your urine would dry out right away. So I would mix just a little bit of mineral oil with it and then when I'd sprinkle a little bit on the grass blades, it wouldn't dry out so fast. And that helped.

09:00
(What about fox? Because you also caught a lot of fox, you said.)

Yeah, I did, a lot of foxes. Foxes were—the red fox, was what it was. They're very easy to capture, red fox. They—oh, I'm sure there's probably some fox that get older that got out of a trap, you know, that are maybe a little difficult, but most of 'em are pretty easy to catch. It's basically the same methods as you would use on coyotes, you know, the territorial thing and the food thing. You use a smaller trap for a fox, of course. They don't have much weight, you know, the average red fox only probably weighs nine or ten pounds, so you gotta use a trap that doesn't take much to spring it off. Where the coyote's a little heavier, and the wolf heavier yet, of course.

But no, that fox is easy to capture. I've had 'em—when I was trapping for fur there a little bit in the late '70s, I took the winters off, and it seemed like during the end of the first season, before you'd quit, there was a few out there that had been exposed to a lot of things that were a little hard to catch. But you were better off to go somewhere else where you could find some that hadn't been exposed and catch them instead of wasting time on that one. But see, if you're in animal damage work, you can't do that because that one there is the one you gotta get. So it really would, it would really test you at times. I mean, you had to come up with all kinds of things to try to get this animal because you just couldn't say, "Well, I gotta go get an easy one."

Like I say, some of 'em really made—the one that caught himself in the fence was the greatest thing that ever happened as far as ironic things like that. But most of 'em, like, a guy asked me one time, you know, he said, "Well, some coyotes you just can't catch." I said, "You know, they can all be trapped, but some just take a lot longer." They can all be caught, but you don't have—you haven't got to time to be there. So that's why we have to rely on the airplane or the dogs or

some alternative method, you know. You just—it would be nice to say you could trap 'em all, but you can't expect a farmer to be feeding 'em lambs all summer. (chuckles)

(So in other words, it's the different methods.)

11:26
You just go to a different method, yeah. And with the methods that we have at our disposal, there's something out there that'll work. There's always something that'll work. In the heavy woods, like I was talking earlier, it's a little more difficult, because they leave very little sign and no aerial hunting, can't seen anything, and it's all—the dogs work pretty good. At that time when I was working in the hills I had a border collie that was a pretty good decoy dog. But yeah, there's a way to get 'em, a way to capture all of 'em. Some just take a little longer. (chuckles)

(chuckles) (Did you ever sell any of your lures?)

At one time I sold some lure during the late '70s there, when I kinda trapped for fur. I sold a little bit of lure, and now I don't make much any more, just a little bit for my own use. But at one time I sold some lure there in the late '70s. Everybody was trapping, and the fur got so high, like, in '77, '78, '79, I think '78 was the peak, there was just—everybody wanted to try trapping because they heard about the fantastic fur prices. So I sold quite a bit of lure then. But now there's not much—there's still people that trap for fur, but nothin' like it was then, you know. But I sold some.

13:04
(What is your favorite trap to use? And why do you like it more than others?)

OK. Well, I—when I started out as a kid trapping, I used my uncle's traps. He had pretty near all long spring traps. There's a long spring and there's a jump trap and a coil spring. He had all long springs. So I trapped most everything in those. And then when I went to work in '62 for Fish and Wildlife Service, branch Predator and Rodent Control, they issued me long spring traps. And they were, you know, I thought very effective traps. They were 3N Victors, which was a standard government trap, offset jaws. They were designed after the input of coyote trappers back in the probably late '30s, early '40s. They were a good trap. And I used those because they were issued.

14:11
Well, as time went on and people got more involved in trapping and because of the fur prices, I started going to more coil spring traps. They seemed like there were some advantages. Well, one of the advantages was of the coil spring trap, when set it's only about this size. Well, the long spring trap, even when it's set, you got the springs way out here. So you have to dig a lot more of a excavation to conceal the trap. Especially in the wintertime, it's tough when the ground's frozen. So that was one of the advantages.

And then they—on the long spring trap, the chain is on the end of the spring. But on the coil spring traps, the later ones, mainly, the last probably fifteen, twenty years, they've got the chain directly on the bottom so the animal pulls straight away. And I was able to test a lot of—incorporate a lot of these things when I worked with the best management practices, because they incorporate a lot of these different things in the traps, 'cause they were measuring foot

damage and stuff like that. But I've always been concerned about, you know, the foot damage to the animal. But the offset jaws, the government has used those for years, and that helps. It can only go shut so tight, you know, they leave a gap. But it'll still, you know, break the skin and stuff, but not too much damage.

I would say right now my favorite trap that I would like, what I like is probably a four coil spring offset trap, offset jaws with four coils and probably cast offset jaws. I use them yet. I've got a few of them, and I really like 'em. I've got pretty much away from the long springs. The main reason, like I said, is, it's hard to conceal them, and there's more foot damage, too.

16:19
(So you find the coil springs more effective?)

Yeah. Well, yes, I do, uh, because they've incorporated so many things in the newer designs. One thing that—if I had one right here I could show you, but one thing that—just a minute, I want to show something I can talk about that I got. (goes to get trap and returns) I'll talk a little bit about this trap right here. Because this is a coil spring trap. It has four coils. It has offset jaws, and the chain is incorporated in what they call inline shock spring. This is one of the features right there that they tested when they were testing the BMP process. This really cuts down on—very little foot damage, because the jaws are gapped. And with this inline shock spring, there's always a give when the coyote pulls away from the stake. There's not that solid pull. And so this is one of the best features that I've found.

I always use a chain link on my trap of about two feet, like I say, twenty-four or twenty-six inches. So you have the a big circle that you get 'em away from the stake. If you have too short a chain right by the stake, they'll pull the stake up, and then if you get muddy conditions, a lot of times it'll ball up and be mud. So you want to keep the coyote away from the stake. But I would say the—like, a #3 size coil spring with offset jaws, four coil, with inline shock spring and twenty-four-inch chain is my favorite.

18:07
(And that's for a coyote.)

This is a coyote. And a fox, for a fox, you would use a much smaller trap, and you wouldn't need this strong a trap. You could use, you know, just a standard two coil. A lot of fox trappers use a 1.5 coil spring, or a 1.75. Even the little 1.5 is plenty big for red fox. But anyway, everyone has their kind of own idea of the perfect trap, but of all the—I've trapped many, many coyotes, and this type of coil spring, about a 3 size, you could even go down to 2 size if they're four coiled and offset.

(And every trapper tends to modify a trap that they buy. What modifications do you always make or usually make to your traps before you set them?)

Well, I always would buy or was issued, it was offset jaws. In the early days you couldn't buy 'em, so sometimes we would take and put—I don't know if you know what hog rings are, but they put 'em in hogs' noses, and put a hog ring around each jaw at opposite ends and that would make a gap. Just put 'em around in a gap in the jaw. You'd have—you'd take and put a hog ring around here (demonstrates on trap) and then one around here and it would keep that open. And,

but, I would say that if a trap comes with too short a chain, I'd always add at least twenty-four inches of chain on the trap. Over the last—this happened since I retired, all traps for coyotes now have a shock spring in 'em. And some people laminate the jaws, but if by laminating, some of the trap jaws are stamped out in the factory stamp and they got sharp edges, uh, and if you laminate them they got a wider surface so they won't cut in.

20:09
But if you buy a trap, you can buy a trap with a wide jaw surface, and that's the thing to buy, really. But I didn't—I never have done too much—I didn't do much laminating to any trap. I always tried to buy the wide jaws.

(It sounds like when you were issued traps when you worked, you had certain modifications that you usually did to them if they weren't quite how you wanted them.)

Well, yeah, they were—what I would do is, sometimes I would, I'd put a swivel in the chain, in the middle of the chain, because they had, like, the 3Ns had a thirty-inch chain, and sometimes it would ball up and knot up, and so I'd put a swivel in the center, that would kind of help so you could go around the chain that way. And other than that, I didn't really do a lot with that trap. It was just pretty good the way it come.

Of course, I would—if they were new, you have to age 'em and rust 'em a little bit, and I'd dye 'em. I still do that, of course, now, but—that's one thing, when trapping, especially trapping canines, or coyotes especially, when you first set a trap, your initial set, you really want it clean. You want a very clean trap. So once you catch an animal in that spot, then everything smells like that coyote. So you can just keep using that same trap as long as you stay in that same circle. But you don't want to take that trap that's caught an animal and take it outside of that circle, 'cause then they'll dig it out. They'll dig around the edge. They'll smell that. But if you got it set in there in all that dirt and there's urine and everything, then they really don't know where that trap is, and you can leave the same trap there for many—long time. But the only reason you'd probably move it, if there was some damage to it or maybe a skunk direct hit the thing with strong skunk essence, then you'd want to move it. It'd overpower anything else and they'd dig it up.

But you never want—like, I want to stress is, when you make the initial set, you always want a very clean trap. And all your traps should be clean, be in a clean box in your vehicle, and don't put dirty traps in that box. Have a separate container for the dirty traps that you pick up. Because they have a nose like—it's unreal. Well, I guess I've said before, I've actually seen three coyotes get in traps, and it's amazing how far they can smell that lure from your trap.

22:47
(So describe how to clean—how you would clean a trap and then dying it.)

OK. Well, what I do on new traps, when I get them, they have kind of a oil film on 'em from the factory. And I clean that off with—usually with gasoline. I'd take a pan of gas and a paintbrush out in the yard. I just go reach in, each individual one, and that'll cut that factory grease off. And then I hang 'em up and just take a garden hose and rinse it off and let 'em hang there and maybe put the garden hose on 'em every day for about a week. And then after a week they've acquired some rust and then you can dye 'em. You've got to have something for the dye to adhere to. The

first year on new traps they don't dye too good, but they'll dye some. Then the second year after you use them, they'll dye pretty good.

What I do, I buy logwood crystals, they call it. It's regular dye for dyeing metal, for dyeing traps. I got about a—oh, it's a fifteen-gallon drum I put it in and heat it up boiling and then bring it back to a simmer and then put my traps in there for about a half an hour and then hang 'em up and let 'em air out. Once they're aired out from dyeing, put 'em in clean cardboard boxes. Or you could have any kind of a box, but it should be cardboard or wood and not metal, because metal may pick up some rust particles. And then keep 'em in there until I get ready to start trapping.

And your old traps that you want to clean up that have caught animals, of course, I go over them with a wire brush and get everything off and then I boil them in pure water and hang 'em up and make sure they're all clean and then put 'em in the dye. You don't have to rust them because the older ones have got the coat. They'll take the dye. And that's about all there is to that.

24:51
(How have your trapping techniques changed over the years?)

Oh, (pause) well, you keep learning, you know, all the time. I suppose there was a lot of difference between trapping as a small boy and as you get older, because then you start figuring out a few things, you know, (chuckles) that you've overlooked. And I used to watch, you know, watch coyotes from a distance, watch animals and how they would act and stuff. And they, you know, you soon discover how much like a dog they are. They want to urinate on things around, all over, you know. Of course, that is their downfall right there. They gotta mark their territory and make sure that other ones know that they're there. That's the downfall of many coyotes, and wolves, I'm sure, too. But actually, it's changed a little bit, the type of sets I use, I guess. I was pretty crude in my early days, and I learned how to cover traps properly and trap on higher ground, where, you know, it would stay dry, stay out of the low ground. You just kind of pick it up over the years.

26:24
(If you had a grandchild asking you about trapping secrets, what would you tell him or her?)

(pause)

(That you might not tell me.) (laughs)

Well, I'm pretty open in my secrets. I would tell 'em that, you know, just study the animal, just learn all you can about the animal's life cycle. Read about it and talk to other people. You've really gotta know what the animal does, their breeding habits, their eating habits, where they rest, and all that. Once you learn their life cycle, then they're pretty easy to capture. The hardest part of capturing an animal is putting your trap on the right location, you know. I can teach most anyone how to make a proper set in a matter of, you know, less than a day, just make perfect sets. But what takes so long is where to put it. And the coyote doesn't veer much off his line of travel. They're kind of lazy animals, you know, they're gonna take the easiest way, like a human would. And they're not gonna walk through tall grass if they can walk on the edge of the grass. They're gonna dive out in that tall grass if they hear a pheasant or a rabbit out there. They might

dive out in there. But if they're goin' from point A to point B, which might be two or three miles, they're gonna follow the edge of the fields, on the edge of the road. They'll go the easiest route. So that's why I would tell a grandchild to learn all you can about their lifestyle. Then you can catch 'em. They you'll know where to set your trap. (chuckles)

(So the big important thing is knowing where to put the trap?)

Oh, yeah. The location is by far—I go to trapping conventions and I put on demonstrations, setting demonstrations, which is fine, and people still do that. But they stress construction of the set, which is important, but there's no way they can show all these different areas, see. So the only way you can do that is have somebody go with you and point 'em out to you, or like I did, look at tracks all the time when you're a little kid and follow things all over and see where they go, you know. And the location is it. That's the main thing. Because you've got thousands of acres and you've got a little spot six inches across they've gotta put their foot in. (chuckles) You know?

29:02
(What will trapping and wildlife management be like in the next fifty years?)

(pause) Well, I don't know. It's kind of a scary question, because trapping is, uh, seems like it's been kind of singled out by some of the animal rights groups that think trapping is unnecessary. But it's definitely part of wildlife management, you know, and—but I don't know—I, (pause) I think there's always gonna be trappers. Uh, some states are getting very restrictive on trapping, and I don't know, there's these—as long as man has changed the use of the land for his livelihood, there's always gonna be a need to control certain segments of wildlife, and trapping is one of 'em. So I think some states that have banned trapping, there's a few, have kind of did something in too much of a hurry. Now there's been one or two of 'em that have had to put trapping back in, because somebody had given them the wrong information. But I think trapping will still be here in the future. I think it's more organized trappers, and the individual trappers have gotta get the word out to the general public that trapping is—can be done humanely and it's a necessary part of wildlife management.

30:54
(So perhaps in the future more communication?)

Right. I think more communication and that's what as a member of the National Trappers Association and the South Dakota Trappers Association, we try to stress, you know, take time to—especially with the younger people, explain trapping to 'em and you know, they've got a lot of misinformation. I know that even some of the old movies, you know, and, uh, the trapper was made out to be the villain, you know. It kinda hurts when you've spent a lifetime doing this. (laughs) But you know, I'm sure that other people have seen this, too, that the mean old trapper, and he's usually really a grubby-looking guy, you know, and just kind of breaking every law there is in the book. (laughs) But we've gotta get some of those stereotypes banned, you know. But it's education. I think it'll—we'll always have trapping, but it's a matter of education.

(Do you see a lot of young people doing it?)

Well, at every convention, we try to have demonstrations in proper handling of fur and stuff for young people, you know. And I'll show anybody how to make sets that wants to know how, you know. But I don't know, it's just hard to get the interest, you know, too. You go to these conventions, there are a lot of guys about my age, which is kind of scary, because I'd like to see the majority of 'em young. It used to be when I was a kid, every farm kid trapped, and a lot of the farmers trapped, because that was to supplement their income. Everybody had a little bunch of poultry and everything like that, so trapping was just part of life. But now, where you got a very small percentage of people out on the land, you know, and many generations have been removed from this, and—but education I would stress.

33:07
(What other hobbies or interests do you have?)

Well, I like to collect old traps, which kinda ties right in with what we've been talking about. But early trapping and early Western stuff, early-day pioneer things, uh. My grandfather homesteaded in Dakota Territory. I like to read things about those days and look at things they used and—but that's my interest. I do a little fishing, not as much as I used to. I do not much hunting. I usually get a deer every fall, and of course I've got pheasants all over here. I'm not much of a pheasant hunter. I maybe shoot one or two a year, just to eat, so I don't get too wild about that. But I used to enjoy waterfall hunting in North Dakota, but where I'm at here now, they seem like they go right on over, because we don't have a whole lot of water. But I did shoot some snow geese this spring. We have a spring snow goose season here. I got a few of them right around locally here. But hunting, a little fishing, collecting old traps and just Old West stuff is my hobbies.

34:38
(Well, to back up just a minute, where did your grandfather—did he emigrate?)

Yeah, he emigrated from Norway, and he came over here in 1878, and he worked for other homesteaders for a few years and then he filed his claim in 1883 where I grew up there at Summit in the hills there. I have a copy of his deed signed by President Benjamin Harrison. So I treasure that. But he, uh, he built up his homestead. He broke his land up with oxen. I've got his affidavits. They had to have an affidavit signed every year for five years that they were on their land, you know, to make sure they—that was one of the agreements for the Homestead Law, they had to actually live on the land. Which is good. So he had to have it signed by two neighbors that he was actually on the land. I've got copies of those, too.

But he came here in '78, when he was twenty-four years old, and like I say, my mother told me this, he died when I was just a little baby, two or three years old, but my mother told me he worked for other people until he filed his claim. I always asked why did he settle in that hilly, rocky country. I always thought, my thinking was it must've reminded him of Norway, you know, mountains. She said, no, the flatland had been taken down below and the hilly sections were still left, so he filed his claim there. So that's why he ended up in the hills. But I love the hills, you know, it's just—it's great wildlife country, rocky hills, draws and sloughs and all that stuff, you know.

My other side, the Corr side, my grandfather there was born in this country. He was a farmer. And then he lived with us in his older days, you know, before he died. He farmed near Wilmont,

and that's—my mother and dad met because Summit and Wilmont are towns close together, and they met one day. My mother said they were out—they always rode horseback, and that's how they met. They were all riding horseback, and that's how they met one day.

(And so that explains your interest in Old West history.)

Oh, yeah, yeah, right. I got copies of my—it's just outrageous stuff that—my Aunt Alma died that past winter. She was ninety-six years old. And she was the last one of that family on my mother's side. She was the baby. And she had given me a copy of my grandmother's letters that she wrote back to Norway after she came to this country in the 1890s. She married my grandfather in 1899, but she came here in the early '90s and she worked as kind of a housekeeper. That's what she did, you know. But anyway, she'd wrote back to her brother in Norway. Well, my aunt was over in Norway a few years ago, and they had copies of these letters. And she brought 'em back and deciphered 'em in English and sent 'em to me, that she wrote back. They're really interesting.

(Oh, I bet.)

And they got married in 1899. My grandfather had been out on his claim a long time. He was forty-six years old before he got married. My mother, there was two boys and two girls, and one of my uncles was killed by lighting driving horses in the '20s. But, yeah, it's really interesting to me, the early days and how those people survived the many just terrible hardships. You know, it was either grasshoppers or dry weather or—there wasn't any farm support group, you know, like they have now for if your crop fails and you have all these different programs. There wasn't anything like that. I know he survived the winter of 1888, he was on the prairie, which was—well, I guess the winter itself wasn't that bad, but it was the terribly blizzard, you know, when so many people died. When they came to this country from Norway, there wasn't hardly a tree on the prairie. All these trees have been planted by people. And the only place there was any trees was where there was a lake or a river. Summit Lake was about a mile and a half from our place, and he would go up there and get wood, you know. If you run out of wood—because they didn't know how long the winters were or anything. But it's very interesting to me, that stuff.

39:32
(Well, he must have trapped, too.)

Uh, he trapped I think probably a little bit. But my Uncle Herman, I don't know how he got so interested in it, but he really got interested in it. Of course, then my mother would help Herman. You know, she was probably a teenager. Herman was a teenager. I think he was about, uh, he was probably about two years older than my mother, maybe three years older. But he taught her and she passed it on to me. But they didn't trap—well, they trapped badgers and stuff, but they didn't tell me much about trapping coyotes, although he had some larger traps. But most of his traps were for smaller animals. She knew how to skin animals, you know. She'd always like to tell people how she taught me how to skin animals, which she did. (chuckles)

(As you said, not many mothers would—)

Not many mothers would skin skunks with their son. (laughs) I can't see anybody doing that now. (laughs)

(Very few, very few. Well, and to talk about your old traps, what is your favorite old trap that you've collected?)

40:48
Well, I've got quite a few. I like the old coyote and wolf traps, I guess, because I kinda ended up doing that kind of stuff. I collect some smaller traps, too, but the early-day wolf traps that were used and the early-day coyote traps, to pick out a favorite, I wouldn't have a certain one. I've got a 48 Newhouse otter trap. They made very few of those. The 48s were a double long spring three. I have one that says "Otter" on it. They're pretty scarce, not very many of those. And then this summer I acquired a trap at a farm auction, I happened to run onto a bullock trap. It's a small trap that is self-setting. It's very scarce and I just happened to be there. I don't know why any person would just have one. There was just one. But anyway, I was glad I could acquire that. I guess I treasure more my old wolf and coyote traps, especially if somebody can tell me something about the certain trap, you know.

I was very interested in early captures. I made a trip up to Harding County here about two years ago where the Harding County wolf was captured in 1925. I went up on the same day, only it was seventy-eight years later, and took pictures of the area. Bob Cree is a retired government trapper from Buffalo, South Dakota. I used to work with Bob, and he still lives there. And he knew this old guy that trapped this wolf in 1925. And so Bob was my guide. Two other government trappers went along and we took a bunch of pictures. I wrote a story about that for a trapping magazine.

42:57
What's really interesting to me is why these—we're kinda gettin' off on a different subject here, but why these men, these trappers, why they picked certain spots, like we were talking about locations, which is very interesting to me, and that's what I wanted to see is—this man's name was Clyde Briggs, and why he picked this spot to catch this wolf. After you get there, of course, Bob Cree had been there many times. He lives close by. But after you look it over, then you know why he picked it, because what goes on in one trapper's head as far as location is in all their heads. And you could see why he picked the spot. The wolf had been roaming that area for thirteen years, and this man came up there. But he knew wolves. And he caught him in thirteen—I think less than two weeks.

(What was special about the spot, when you saw where he put it?)

Well, the spot was—it was near Camp Crook, South Dakota, which is right on the Montana border, northeast of Camp Crook. And there's two what I call "edge effects" what you're trapping. You always look at edge effects when they travel edges. There was a wagon trail that went along kind of the top of this ridge. Now it's a pickup trail, but in the early days it was a wagon trail. That went straight pretty much east and west. And then there was another trail that came up out of some real rough, rugged country, and they met on top of this high ground. And he'd made his set where these two trails intersect. Of course, anyone knows that's done a lot of trapping for the canines, that where two things come together, your odds are much better. And he had these two things coming together.

44:50

So Bob didn't know if the wolf—nobody knew if the wolf came down the wagon trail or he came out of this rough country. But that's where the set was. And of course, he had a little luck. He knew what he was doing, but the night that he caught the wolf, it rained, a lot. And it washed away all the human scent. Because this wolf is smart. He had to be pretty smart, because he'd survived thir—they'd been chasing him for around for thirteen years. The only thing I could think of, the rain had washed away the human scent, but there must have been the faint odor of the natural scent of another wolf that he'd placed on this bush. And he caught him at a 4.5 Newhouse, which is a strong trap, so he had these muddy conditions, but as luck would have it, he had this powerful trap that could come up through mud, and he caught him.

Anyway, it was considered—I think it got into the *Congressional Record.* It was the greatest feat, I guess, of trapping that ever had taken place. He'd caught him in such a short time. But he'd studied him, and he knew wolf's habits and where he—like we was talking early, he studied his travel ways. He saw his tracks went to the west, so he knew he was coming from the west. And it was just a matter of about four or five days after he set his trap he got him. The wolf came back. But they'd been—the local ranchers had been trying to capture this wolf, I don't know if they'd caught him. They called him Three Toes, because he had two toes missing on one front foot and one toe on the other front foot, so he knew what traps were. But they'd been trying to catch him with horses, and he'd always get into some real rough country where they couldn't follow him. But he did end up being trapped. At that age, you think he might be lettin' his guard down a little bit, too. (laughs)

(Now Clyde, the man who tracked him, was he a government trapper?)

Biological Survey trapper.

(Really?)

Yes. Yeah. I've got that article on him. I'll share it with you if you want to read it.

(I would like to see that. So, interesting.)

Yeah. He caught him in 1925 in July, and we were up there—I told Bob I wanted to go the same day he caught him because I wanted to look what the vegetation looks like this time of the year and everything, you know. But seventy-eight years later. (laughs)

47:23
(Well, I think that just about wraps up my questions, Odon. Do you have anything you'd like to add?)

Well, I always like to talk about trapping. I guess I've kinda spent a lot of my lifetime doing this thing, and it still interests me. I really enjoyed my career with the government and trapping in general before that, and even now, afterwards, you know. I hope trapping can continue, like we were talking about. It's just a matter of education, you know, that's what we gotta do. But I'll keep at it, I suppose, as long as I can set a trap. I started out, I couldn't even—when I was a little kid, I couldn't even set a #1, but I can still set a coyote trap, so I'll keep at it for a few years. (laughs)

(Good for you! Good for you! Well, thank you very much, Odon. This concludes our interview on CD #2. So thank you very much.)

You're welcome.

48:31 End of File 2. End of interview